

viewpoint within that field, alongside others. Thus, what started as an "intervention" is now "after the fact" and the book can now serve as an introduction to what it originally only hoped to help bring into existence.

As I point out in this edition, the term "New Literacy Studies" is probably unfortunate, since anything that was once "new" is soon "old" and the New Literacy Studies is now no longer young. The New Literacy Studies is really just a way to name work that, from a variety of different perspectives, views literacy in its full range of cognitive, social, interactional, cultural, political, institutional, economic, moral, and historical contexts. When this book was written, the traditional view of literacy was "cognitive" or "psychological," the view that literacy is a set of abilities or skills residing inside people's heads. Because the cognitive or psychological was already entrenched, I did not stress cognitive features of literacy in this book, but rather tried to show the limitations of a purely

work I have written integrate them with a see Gee 1992, 2003, is on the social and

first, to give readers language and literacy, Studies; second, to language-in-use-in-specific perspective ion of "Discourses" below. Chapters 2-5 sters engage directly lysis throughout the : last task. The first ng some of the basic the moral viewpoint

The general argument of the book, then, is this: to appreciate language in its social context, we need to focus not on language alone, but rather on what I will call "Discourses," with a capital "D." Discourses ("big 'D' Discourses") include much more than language. To see what I mean, consider for a moment the unlikely topic of bars (pubs). Imagine I park my motorcycle, enter my neighborhood "biker bar," and say to my leather-jacketed and tattooed drinking buddy, as I sit down: "May I have a match for my cigarette, please?" What I have said is perfectly grammatical English, but it is "wrong" nonetheless, unless I have used a

heavily ironic tone of voice. It is not just the content of what you say that is important, but how you say it. And in this bar, I haven't said it in the "right" way. I should have said something like "Gotta match?" or "Give me a light, wouldya?"

But now imagine I say the "right" thing ("Gotta match?" or "Give me a light, wouldya?"), but while saying it, I carefully wipe off the bar stool with a napkin to avoid getting my newly pressed designer jeans dirty. In this case, I've still got it all wrong. In this bar they just don't do that sort of thing: I have said the right thing, but my "saying-doing" combination is nonetheless all wrong. It's not just what you say or even just how you say it, it's also *who* you are and *what* you're doing while you say it. It is not enough just to say the right "lines."

Other sorts of bars cater to different "types of people." If I want to—and I am allowed to by the "insiders"—I can go to many bars, and, thereby, be many different "types of people." So, too, with schools. Children are "hailed" ("summoned") to be different sorts of students in different classrooms, even in different domains like literature or science. In one and the same classroom, different children may well be "hailed" to be different types of students, one, for example, a "gifted" student and the other a "problem" student. There are specific ways to get recognized—different in different schools and at different times—as "gifted" or "a problem." The teacher, the student, and fellow students need, however unconsciously, to know these ways for "business as usual" to go on. Conscious knowledge can, I will argue, sometimes disrupt this "business as usual." A good deal of what we do with language, throughout history, is to create and act out different "types of people" for all sorts of occasions and places.

Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or "types of people") by specific groups, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort, business people of a certain sort, church members of a certain sort, African-Americans of a certain sort, women or men of a certain sort, and so on and so forth through a very long list. Discourses are ways of being "people like us." They are "ways of being in the world"; they are "forms of life"; they are socially situated identities. They are, thus, always and everywhere social and products of social histories.

Language makes no sense outside of Discourses, and the same is true for literacy. There are many different "social languages" (different styles of language used for different purposes and occasions) connected in complex ways with different Discourses. There are many different sorts

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of literacy—many literacies—connected in complex ways with different Discourses. Cyberpunks and physicists, factory workers and boardroom executives, policemen and graffiti-writing urban gang members engage in different literacies, use different “social languages,” and are in different Discourses. In fact, Hispanic gangs and African-American gangs use graffiti in different ways, and engage in different Discourses. And, too, the cyberpunk and the physicist might be one and the same person, behaving differently at different times and places. In this book I will use schools and communities, rather than bars, as examples of sites where Discourses operate to integrate and sort persons, groups, and society.

Each of us is a member of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities. These Discourses need not, and often don't, represent consistent and compatible values. There are conflicts among them, and each of us lives and breathes these conflicts as we act out our various Discourses. For some, these conflicts are more dramatic than for others. The conflicts between the home-based Discourse of some African-American children and the Discourses of the school are many, deep, and apparent. Indeed, the values of many school-based Discourses treat African-American people as “other” and their social practices as “deviant” and “non-standard.” In becoming a full member of school Discourses, African-American children run the risk of becoming complicit with values that denigrate and damage their home-based Discourse and identity. The conflicts are real and cannot simply be wished away. They are the site of very real struggle and resistance. Such conflicts also exist for many women between their ways of being in the world as women of certain types and the dominant Discourses of male-based public institutions. Similar sorts of conflicts exist for many others, as well, most certainly for many people, white, brown, or black, based on social class. They are endemic in modern plural societies.

Each Discourse incorporates a usually taken for granted and tacit set of “theories” about what counts as a “normal” person and the “right” ways to think, feel, and behave. These theories crucially involve viewpoints on the distribution of “social goods” like status, worth, and material goods in society (who should and who shouldn't have them). The biker bar “says” that “tough guys” are “real men”; some schools “say” that certain children—often minority and lower socioeconomic children—are not suited to higher education and professional careers. Such theories, which are part and parcel of each and every Discourse, and which, thus, underlie the use of language in all cases, are what I call in this book ideologies. And, thus, too, I claim that language is inextricably bound up with ideology and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from it.

I do not in this book intend to hide my claims behind linguistic or sociological jargon unless that jargon is integral to the claim being made. Real people really get hurt by the workings of language, power, ideology, and Discourse discussed in this book. I see no reason to sanitize such damage with distancing language. At the same time, the fact that the issues discussed in this book relate to the workings of power and hurt does not mean that these are not also theoretical issues. In fact, the book constitutes an overt theory both of literacy and a socially based linguistics, a theory that claims that all practice (human social action) is inherently caught up with usually tacit theories that empower or disempower people and groups of people. I will claim that it is a moral obligation to render one's tacit, taken-for-granted theories overt when they have the potential to hurt people. This book makes some of my theories about language and society overt and invites you, not to agree with me, but to make your theories in this area overt also.

I do not believe there is any one uniquely “right” way to describe and explicate the workings of language in society. Thus, I do not see myself as in competition in a “winner take all” game with other social and critical theorists, many of whom I greatly admire. Certain ways of describing and explicating language and society are better and worse for different purposes. And any way of doing so is worthwhile only for the light it shines on complex problems and the possibilities it holds out for imagining better and more socially just futures.

Furthermore, I believe that a great many of us, coming from different disciplinary backgrounds, are using different words to say very similar things, at least where the important matters are concerned. Thus, too, I believe we have made a good deal of progress, more than our different terminologies might at first suggest. It is for these reasons that I attempt to sketch out a sociocultural approach to language and literacies in Chapters 1–5 without using my own favored terms. Rather, I develop what I hope is a rather consensus-like overview using the work and words of many different people.